

# Northern Virginia Long-Term Care UPDATE

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## Information and Issues from the Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program

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### GENERAL ASSEMBLY BUDGET SUMMARY ON AGING

1. **Home & Community Based Care.** Restores \$750,000 the first year and \$850,000 the second year of biennium for home and community based care through area agencies on aging (such as transportation, in-home care, adult day health, care coordination, congregate meals, home-delivered meals and respite care). Funding for area agencies on aging was reduced by \$1.4 million each year in 2002-2004 biennium.
2. **Public Guardianship.** Adds \$110,000 first year and \$250,000 second year to establish five new Public Guardian and Conservator Programs in unserved areas. These funds were in Governor's budget. The General Assembly's budget eliminates the language that made the additional funding contingent on passage of the Governor's tax plan.
3. **Prescription Drugs.** Provides \$125,000 per year of the biennium to the Virginia Health Care Foundation to solicit proposals to expand Pharmacy Connection software program to unserved or underserved regions of state.

A second amendment on prescription drugs restores \$35,000 each year to the Pharmacy Connect Program in Southwest Virginia.

A third amendment on prescription drugs provides \$75,000 each year to the

Virginia Health Care Foundation to support establishment of the Rx Partnership, a public-private partnership to increase access to prescription medication for the state's low-income, uninsured population.

4. **Personal Care.** Provides \$3,000,000 in the second year of the biennium to increase personal care reimbursement rates under community-based Medicaid waiver programs by 5%.
5. **Auxiliary Grant.** Adds \$2.2 million in second year of biennium to increase current monthly auxiliary grant rate for assisted living from \$866 to \$894 (higher in Northern Virginia).
6. **Nursing Home Reimbursement Rate.** Removes budget language that made an increase of \$3.00 per day for nursing homes contingent on passage of the Governor's tax proposal.
7. **Care Management.** Directs DMAS to restore the elderly case management services to the State Medicaid Plan.
8. **Caregivers Grant.** Adds \$50,000 each year for the Caregivers Grant Program (which provides up to \$500 per year for caregivers with income under \$50,000 and who provide unreimbursed care).

Source: Compiled by the Northern Virginia Aging Network, May 2004

**The Ombudsman Formal  
Investigation Log is online!**

[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ombudsman](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/ombudsman)

## Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Staff

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### Medicare Approved Drug Discount Cards

The Medicare Modernization Act of 2003 created a new Medicare approved drug discount card. This is a voluntary program and many existing drug discount cards may offer you the same, or better, discounts. If you decide to buy a discount card, be careful choosing it! The drug card sponsors can change the drugs covered by the cards every seven days, so it is wise to use the card immediately to take advantage of the discount.

Here are the top 10 frequently asked questions to assist you with making this decision:

1. **Who can buy a Medicare-approved discount card?** Anyone who is eligible for Medicare and who does not have drug benefits under full coverage Medicaid.
2. **When can I purchase a card?** You can purchase one of these cards beginning May 2004. The discounts are effective the month after you choose a card.
3. **How much will the cards cost?** The cards will cost no more than \$30 in 2004 and no more than \$30 in 2005. Remember, this is a voluntary program.
4. **Is there any special assistance for persons with low incomes?** Yes. If your annual income is less than \$12,569 a year (\$16,862 for couples) then you will receive the card for free. You would also receive a \$600 credit to assist with your drug purchases. You cannot get this special assistance if you have drug coverage through Medicaid, the Tricare military health plan or from a group health plan.
5. **Is there an asset test for the card?** No. There is no asset test for this program.
6. **How much will the cards save me?** It is projected that these cards will save you an average of 10 to 20% on the cost of your drugs. The savings will vary from card to card, so be sure to compare the cards before buying one.
7. **How can I compare cards?** If you have a computer you can access the Medicare web site at [www.medicare.gov](http://www.medicare.gov) to use their drug discount card comparison tool. You can also call the Medicare hotline at **1-800-Medicare (1-800-633-4227)** hotline for assistance.
8. **Can I have more than one Medicare discount card?** No. You can only have one Medicare-sponsored discount card, but you can have as many non-Medicare discount cards as you want. You can only use one discount card for each purchase, so have the pharmacist compare which card offers the best deal to you.
9. **Can I use the Medicare discount card at any pharmacy?** No. Not every pharmacy will honor every discount card, so be careful that the card you choose will be accepted at the pharmacy you use for your prescription drug needs.
10. **Can I switch to another card if I am dissatisfied with my initial purchase?** You can switch Medicare drug cards between November 15 and December 31, 2004. You are also allowed to enroll in another card during a special enrollment period if: you move outside the card's service area; you move to or from a long-

term care facility; or you enroll or disenroll from a Medicare private health plan.

If you need further assistance understanding this program after contacting Medicare, you can contact a health insurance counselor with the Fairfax Area Agency on Aging by calling 703-324-5851. If you do not live in Fairfax County, please call your local Area Agency on Aging for assistance.

Source: Howard Houghton, Program Coordinator, Virginia Insurance Counseling and Assistance Program

### **Goodwin House West Hosts SAGE Program**

Goodwin House West is hosting classes for the SAGE (Studies in Aging for Gerontology Employees) Program. Goodwin House will pay for their employees to attend the classes toward the SAGE Certificate in Aging, offered through George Mason University. The classes are held at Goodwin House West in the Auditorium on Tuesday evenings from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. A simple supper is available from 5:30 p.m.

#### **Why GMU SAGE?**

There is a pressing need for accessible university based aging courses to accommodate the growing area of older adult care. Most Americans are aware of the demographic trends in aging, and the implications of the aging baby boomer generation. Our community requires an increase of well-prepared and adequately trained individuals to provide a wide range of aging services.

#### **What is the GMU SAGE Certificate?**

SAGE is a CEU and certificate program designed to meet educational needs of a variety of disciplines in the field of aging. There are three theoretical modules: Biological & Health,

Psychological, Sociological Aspects of Aging, and three practical modules cover Death, Dying and Grieving; Care of the Patient with Alzheimer's, and Developing Health Promotion & Family Relationship Skills.

### **Caregiver Benediction**

**By Wendy Lustbader, MSW**

A rested caregiver has more patience.

A rested caregiver has more tolerance for frustration.

A rested caregiver has a sense of humor; which comes from perspective.

A rested caregiver has more to say and more to give.

A rested caregiver is a good caregiver.

To take care of yourself is to take care of the person who depends on you.

### **Direct Care Workers Week**

Under the direction of the Fairfax Long Term Care Coordinating Council (LTCCC), the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors proclaimed June 10 – June 17 as Direct Care Workers Week. The Proclamation on June 7 includes a recognition that “the well-being and happiness of these citizens [in long-term care facilities] depends in large part on the nursing assistants, nurse’s aides, caregivers, residential counselors, care managers, home care aides, personal assistants, home health aides, personal care aides, personal care workers, direct support workers, homemakers, personal attendants, companions, sitters, program assistants, certified medication technicians and others who provide daily, conscientious hands-on care in nursing homes, home health agencies, group homes, adult day care centers, assisted living facilities, adult homes, individuals’ own home and other long-term care settings.”

The Northern Virginia Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program is committed to a policy of nondiscrimination in all programs, services and activities and will provide reasonable accommodations and alternate formats upon request. To request accommodations or alternate formats, call 703-324-5861 or TTY: 703-449-1186

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Serving the City of Alexandria and the Counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun, and Prince William through their Area Agencies on Aging.

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